

TITLE: Senate executive Session Briefing

AUTHOR: Donald E. Welzenbach

VOLUME: 30 ISSUE: Winter YEAR: 1986

STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE



A collection of articles on the historical, operational, doctrinal, and theoretical aspects of intelligence.

All statements of fact, opinion or analysis expressed in Studies in Intelligence are those of the authors. They do not necessarily reflect official positions or views of the Central Intelligence Agency or any other US Government entity, past or present. Nothing in the contents should be construed as asserting or implying US Government endorsement of an article's factual statements and interpretations.

SECRET

*Big pictures and a low profile***SENATE EXECUTIVE SESSION BRIEFING****Donald E. Welzenbach**

In early September 1973, Senator Henry "Scoop" Jackson (D-Washington), chairman of the Armed Forces Committee, and committee members Senators Sam Nunn (D-Georgia) and John Tower (R-Texas) approached DDS&T Carl E. Duckett to ask his help in preparing a briefing of the full Senate on the nation's capability to monitor the SALT-II agreement. This pact had been signed by President Richard M. Nixon and Soviet Party Chief Leonid Brezhnev at the White House on Thursday, 21 June 1973. Carl Duckett had been present to witness the event. Before the Senate began debating the ratification of the SALT agreement, the three senators wanted to use classified overhead photography to demonstrate to their colleagues, some of whom had expressed strong doubts on the subject, just how effectively the United States could monitor the pact with the Soviets.

Duckett, who was effective in conducting congressional relations, was anxious to demonstrate the practicality of satellite reconnaissance and photo intelligence. He suggested to Senator Jackson that CIA provide view-graphs and a large, rear-projection screen so as to make the illustrations clearly visible throughout the chamber. Jackson demurred, saying the Senate would not tolerate such gadgetry. He wanted only enlargements of the photography that could be displayed on an easel.

Realizing that this meant very big enlargements, Duckett went to NPIC Director John J. Hicks to ask for special assistance. Hicks told Duckett that NPIC could produce quality photo enlargements of up to 30 by 60 inches. Duckett and Senator Jackson chose the photos they wanted and NPIC set about producing the briefing boards.

To dramatize the size of an SS-9 missile site, Duckett had NPIC superimpose a photograph of an SS-9 site over an outline of the Pentagon drawn to the same scale. Another briefing board superimposed a photograph of a Soviet launch control center on a same-scale drawing of the Capitol. Duckett wanted to make certain that the senators grasped the size of these missile-launch facilities. "I wanted them to understand that we were talking about a great big thing, not about a little hole in the ground," Duckett recalled.

On Saturday, 22 September, Duckett and R. Evans Hineman, who was then Deputy Director of Weapons Intelligence and had earlier served as Agency representative in support of the SALT negotiations, rehearsed the presentation in Duckett's Langley office. The next day, Sunday, the two men took the 26 briefing boards, measuring six feet long by three feet high, to Senator Jackson's house where they coached him on how to make the presentation. Again on Monday, this time in Senator Jackson's Capitol Hill office, Duckett and Hineman rehearsed the presentation. With all three senators watching, Duckett, playing

SECRET

73

SECRET

Briefing

the role that Senator Jackson would perform the next day, read the script explaining the graphics, while Hineman, playing the part of Senator Nunn, used a pointer to illustrate the points being made orally.

The DDS&T's two major concerns about the briefing were, first, to keep it secret and, second, to make certain that the senators understood it was the CIA that provided the information. Senator Jackson assured Duckett that if the briefing were given to an executive session of the Senate the existing rules would provide ample protection. Jackson had a copy of the rules for executive session placed on each senator's desk prior to the opening of the briefing. These rules, in paraphrase, threaten any senator who reveals what happens in executive session with expulsion from the Senate. Because the briefing would be part of an executive session, only senators could be in the Senate chamber; no pages, ushers, or, for that matter, not even Duckett.

The briefing was given on the afternoon of Tuesday, 25 September 1973. Senators Nunn and Jackson stood in the well in front of the vacant desk of the President of the Senate with the 26 large briefing boards. As Senator Jackson described the various photographs, Senator Nunn pointed out the details. Senator Jackson wanted to make sure that, if any senators had questions he could not answer, Duckett would be close at hand to provide the data. Thus, he arranged for the DDS&T to stay in the office of the President of the Senate, which opens directly off the Senate chamber. Senator Tower stayed at the front of the chamber to act as a runner, ready to take written questions from Senator Jackson to Duckett and return with the written answers.

The President of the Senate is the Vice President of the United States, and in September 1973 the office was held by Spiro T. Agnew. Present with Duckett in Agnew's office were Richard Perle, then an adviser to the Armed Forces Committee, and Dickie Fosdick, Senator Jackson's chief staff assistant. About midway through the briefing, Duckett, Perle, and Fosdick heard a great commotion in the outer hallway in front of the main entrance to the Vice President's office suite. Newsmen were rapping on the Vice President's door and Duckett feared they had learned about the super-secret briefing given at the executive session.

Dickie Fosdick learned from one of the newsmen that Vice President Agnew had just been indicted in Baltimore for income tax evasion and the newsmen were trying to find him. Duckett, Perle, and Fosdick left the office through interconnecting doors which led to another, inner hallway. Thus they were able to avoid the newsmen. (Vice President Agnew was not so fortunate. The newsmen eventually found him, as did the US marshals.)

Senators Jackson, Nunn, and Tower completed the briefing without interruption. No questions were asked that Jackson or Nunn could not answer. Thus, Duckett's assistance was not needed nor were the senators aware of his absence until much later. More importantly, not one senator ever revealed what was discussed at the executive session.

This anecdote is classified SECRET.